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ABSTRACT

A Texas study examined what individual learning and/or other needs were identified by adult basic education (ABE) students. It also assessed ABE teachers' propensity to identify the same student needs and determined if these needs were met within the ABE program. A literature review focused on learner types, past experience, program development, and learner needs. The sample consisted of 60 ABE participants chosen randomly from 4,268 adults enrolled in Region VI Education Service Center Adult Cooperative ABE programs during September-November 1990. Data collection was in the form of a focused interview where the interviewer read all the questions to the interviewee and recorded the responses. Thirty-five students were contacted for a follow-up telephone interview survey in January 1991. Thirty ABE teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire; 28 complied. A final component of the data collection was the ABE classroom observations. Two self-perceived ABE student needs were very evident in the findings of this research: educational advancement and self-improvement. ABE teachers listed student self-improvement as a need but identified literacy development as most important; they felt job advancement was as important as self-improvement. During the follow-up survey, a majority of the ABE students stated that their needs had been met. Recommendations for practice and further research were made. (36 references) (YLB)

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SELF PERCEIVED NEEDS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS AND THEIR ROLE IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

by

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Presented at the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) Annual Conference

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INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that more than one-third of the entire adult population in the United States is functionally illiterate (Kozol, 1985). This means that about 60 million functionally illiterate adults are in need of education. However, the Adult Basic Education (ABE) program, funded by both federal and state agencies, serves only about three million people each year, and 30% of those leave the ABE program without successfully achieving their goals (Kozol, 1985).

The ABE program was created by the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. It was foreshadowed by 200 years of adult education. In the early history of the United States, adult education was vocational in nature, not necessarily literacy, mostly as apprenticeships, internships, and craft training. Academic training was saved for the upper class, land owners, and future politicians. The Progressive Movement established Americanization education for immigrants, night school for workers, and vocational education for unskilled workers (Elias & Merriam, 1980; Knowles, 1977). The Adult Education Act of 1966 was enacted as Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (Ulmer, 1969) and established the national Adult Basic Education (ABE) program to offer education for those adults with literacy levels that kept them from obtaining and/or retaining employment (Chisman & Associates, 1990; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982). As Beder (1989) tells us "ABE has been established to meet a social need, the need for a literate society" (p. 33).

Harman explains that "more and more working members of mainstream America are found to be either totally illiterate or unable to read at the level...required..." (1987, p. 1). According to Cetron (1988), by the year 2010,

almost constant retraining will be necessary to either keep jobs or obtain new ones. The majority of jobs at that time will require some amount of information processing skills or technology. In A Nation at Risk, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) told us that "learning is the indispensable investment required for success in the 'information age' we are entering" (p. 7). Harman (1987) agrees by stating, "Literacy is not the simple ability to read and write" (p. 2).

Statement of the Problem

The adult education literature (Cross, 1988; Hayes & Valentine, 1989; Knox, 1977; Seaman, 1971; Seaman & Fellenz, 1989) shows the positive results of student participation in developing adult education programs. At the same time, studies on ABE and literacy programs (Cook, 1977; Fingeret, 1983; Mezirow, 1978; Ulmer, 1969) indicate that the adult learner's self-perceived needs and educational goals are not incorporated into programming, nor are the students invited, by program developers and staff, to participate in establishing program goals.

Therefore, ABE staff are disavowing the adult learners' role in their own education. More importantly, ABE staff are limiting the success that their students will have by limiting the individual motivation all learners need.

Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were: (1) to examine what individual learning and/or other needs are identified by ABE students, (2) to assess ABE teachers' propensity to identify the same student needs, and (3) to determine if these needs are met within the ABE program.

More specifically, the researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the self-perceived needs of ABE students?
2. What do ABE teachers perceive to be the students' needs?
3. How do student-perceived needs and teacher-perceived needs compare?
4. Are student-perceived needs incorporated into ABE programming?
5. What do students expect to be able to do as a result of participation in the ABE program?
6. Does ABE meet students' needs?

Significance of the Study

The number of adults who successfully complete ABE programs is very low (Kozol, 1985). The literature (Beder, 1990a; Boone, 1985; Boyle, 1981; Fingeret, 1983) indicates that a successful ABE program tries to understand student needs and incorporate them into the program goals and objectives. A failure to equate student and program goals will result in a high drop-out rate (Seaman, 1971).

This study has evaluated the attainment of student perceived needs by Adult Basic Education programs. The results of this study will have implications for future ABE program development. Areas of weakness and strength can be delineated for improving present programs, developing new programs, and using resources more efficiently. Recruitment could be refined to attract and retain students at a higher rate, thus reducing dropout rates. Counseling and assessment could be more individualized and effective. The results should also lead to further research in such areas as student motivation and student participation in program development. Bova (1985) concluded her research on

ABE participation patterns by stating that this information could "become a valuable resource for diagnosing learning needs and designing educational activities" (p.104).

Delimitations

This study was limited to the Central Texas counties of Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Milam, Montgomery, Polk, Robertson, San Jacinto, Walker, and Washington. It was also limited to individuals enrolled in the Adult Education Cooperative programs funded through the Division of Adult and Continuing Education, Texas Education Agency, from September, 1990 through January, 1991.

Definitions of Terms

In order to avoid confusion, this study will adopt the term *self-perceived* needs to mean those which are identified by the individual being questioned.

Adult Cooperative refers to the Region VI Education Service Center (ESC) Adult Education Cooperative. Region VI, with headquarters in Huntsville, Texas, is one of 62 regional cooperatives, and is responsible for providing coordinated adult education services to area citizens. The Region VI ESC serves a fifteen-county area of Central Texas.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It seems that as adult educators, we are not marketing our programs successfully, since the numbers of adult learners entering our doors are so small. We must, as Beder and Valentine say "tailor...promotion and instructional efforts to specific subgroups" and we "must know what the relevant groups are," so that we

can "predict with reasonable accuracy what each group's reaction will be to the program's offerings" (1987a, p. 1). We must know our ABE learners, know their desires and their motivations, understand their heterogeneous characteristics, and accept their self-perceived needs. Programs which are developed based upon programmer-perceived student needs have trouble recruiting and retaining adult learners. Passive educational programs will not meet with success because the learner has no part in the process.

Recruitment is often based on attempts to convince the adult population that they need what the program has to offer. Those who do have similar needs or who "buy into" the recruitment claims will enter the program. Those who bought in may not decide to remain. Those who do not see the program curricula as meeting their needs will not even walk in the door.

Learner Types

Rather than treat ABE students as a homogeneous group, adult educators need to realize that they comprise a very heterogeneous grouping of people with an equally heterogeneous grouping of needs (Alamprese, 1990). Chisman and Associates talks of "one size fits all literacy instruction" (1990, p. 17). That is not out of line for the general population. To the educated, literate strata of society, illiterates all fit a specific description. Usually, that description is not very flattering. Beder and Valentine state that ABE students are "as goal-oriented as any group of learners engaged in protracted and demanding educational activities" (1990, p. 93). Hiemstra insists that "to be adult means to be independent, to possess a certain amount of self-motivation, and to be capable of making decisions about life and its problems" (1976, p. 33). Beder and Valentine explain that, just as it is natural to find varied subgroups within any general educational group, it is also natural to

discover that motivational reasons are "multidimensional and go well beyond the simple desire to improve basic skills or attain a high school diploma" (1990, p. 93).

Past Experience

Past educational experiences impact greatly on the ABE student. These past experiences are brought into the present or future learner situations and must be considered if there is to be success. Negatives which are found by the ABE learner include difficult, cumbersome testing procedures, immature learning materials, poor teacher attitudes, inappropriate teaching methods, confusing teacher expectations, and insufficient pupil progress reports. All of this culminates with inadequate student counseling.

These problems can easily be corrected. Testing can be conducted in a manner which will strive to alleviate test anxiety. Teachers and aides who are more empathetic can be hired. Staff inservice can be more effective and, perhaps, conducted on a more regular schedule. Reasons for nonparticipation in ABE programming was the basis for research done in Iowa (Beder, 1990b). Data analysis resulted in four factors labeled *Low Perception of Need* ("A high school diploma wouldn't improve my life"), *Perceived Effort* ("It would cost me too much money to go back to school"), *Dislike for School* ("I just don't like school"), and *Situational Barriers* ("I don't have enough free time to go back to school"). These factors were then correlated with the demographic variables to see if there was any association. These correlations indicated that as nonparticipants age, their interest in returning to school decreases. Family and work responsibilities also affect their willingness to seek an education. The most important finding was that nonparticipation is linked to the subjects' attitudes and perceptions of the ABE program.

Both Seaman (1971) and Beder (1990b) related their work to the portrayal ABE has. Seaman's suggestion that pre-entry counseling and participant involvement in program development is supported by Beder's research. What is important to note is that there are 20 years between the two articles. Nothing in the ABE literature base explains why, after 20 years, this discrepancy still remains.

Program Development

Adult educators must include the learners by asking them to participate in determining their own needs and interests. Unless the adult learners are allowed to take an active part in their own educational process, they will feel no ownership nor will they hold any responsibility for successes or failures. Research has shown that the adult is a voluntary learner (Cross, 1988). If we accept, also, the notion that adult learners know their own wants and set their own goals, then we can state that adult learners will participate in programs which they perceive as meeting these conditions.

The adult learner sets out to learn selectively. This concept of "availability" (Harman, 1987) should guide the adult education programmer in program development since the adult learner will become available for those educational goals seen as important and be unavailable for any others. Similarly, any adult who accepts his or her "lot in life" as unalterable will not be open to learning.

Hayes and Valentine (1989), in their most recent research, concur that there are different types of learners with different literacy needs:

"If adult educators are dedicated to the notion of life-relevant instruction, they had best come to terms with the fact that relevance and functionality are highly personal and probably highly transient - constructs that are nearly impossible to determine without frank and continuous communication with learners" (p. 13).

Learner Needs

A serious issue is that of whom the ABE program serves. Fingeret (1990) discusses the "tension" between meeting adult learners' goals and meeting society's goals. Often, the curriculum serves neither learner goals nor society's goals. This is when we see literacy programs which are "generic in nature, rather than being directed to a specific and quantifiable program goal that is shared by the learner" (Foster, 1990, p. 80). Knowles (1970) suggests that the "adult educator's mission" is to meet the needs and goals of individuals, institutions, and society.

What, then, are the needs of the adult learners and who establishes those needs? Scissons (1982) tells us that there is very little agreement as to what needs are, how they are incorporated into adult programming, or how to best measure them. Felt needs, however, are those which motivate the learner to continue the educational process (Brookfield, 1984; Seaman & Fellenz, 1989). These felt needs must become a part of the client analysis and assessment (Beder, 1980; Boone, 1985; Boyle, 1981). Seaman and Fellenz (1989) remind us that, unless we include the learner's needs, learning will end.

When a need is self-perceived, it is easy for the adult educator to label it "subjective" or a "want." However, that same educator will label a programmer-perceived learning need as "educational" or "objective." In actuality, the labels are unimportant. The true importance lies with the impact the needs have on program development. Adult educators should handle all needs assessment carefully and with a clear concept of what they consider to be educational needs. At the same time, they need to remember that different learners see needs as different things. Program politics and the programmers' own value judgements

affect how client wants and needs are interpreted. When there is a conflict, the clients' self-perceived needs may take a back seat to the programmer-perceived client needs.

Beder and Valentine (1987b) conducted a study of the Iowa Adult Basic Education population as part of a three part study of the Iowa adult learner population. The method of data collection was a focused interview and an administration of a psychoeducational battery. Factor analysis was used to group the variables into 10 factors identified as motivations for attending ABE: (1) self-improvement, (2) family responsibility, (3) diversion, (4) literacy development, (5) community/church involvement, (6) job advancement, (7) launching, (8) economic need, (9) educational advancement, and (10) urging of others.

Additionally, disjoint cluster analysis was done in order to group the respondents into mutually exclusive clusters, where the cluster members are similar to each other and dissimilar to members of other clusters. The clusters identified were labeled: (1) mainstream women, (2) the urged, (3) young adults, (4) the climbers, (5) the least affluent/least employed, and (6) low ability strivers.

The findings show that ABE participants want to better themselves and should not be seen as educationally or economically deprived citizens. They also show that the ABE population is not any more homogeneous than any other segment of society. Suggestions for program recruitment offered by the authors include using different tactics and techniques to reach the six different clusters.

METHODOLOGY

Population

The population for this study was defined as all adults (N=4,268) who enrolled in Region VI Education Service Center Adult Education Cooperative ABE programs during September-November, 1990, in the Central Texas counties of Brazos, Burleson, Grimes, Leon, Liberty, Madison, Milam, Montgomery, Polk, Robertson, San Jacinto, Walker, and Washington. Included in the population were all adults, 17 years of age and older, who enrolled as new ABE students or re-enrolled to complete the ABE program.

Sample

Sample size was 60 ABE participants chosen randomly at Region VI Education Service Center Adult Cooperative sites. The sites included in the research were Bryan, College Station, Conroe, Navasota, Centerville, Madisonville, Hearne, and Sheperd. The participant list for individual sites ranged from one each in Navasota, College Station, and Centerville to 21 in Bryan.

Data Collection

For the present study, it was decided to use the Beder and Valentine (1987a) focused interview in the form of teacher-perceived student motivations for attending ABE. This would allow for a comparison of student self-perceived needs and teacher-perceived student needs. The demographics obtained from the teachers related to the type and size of classes. The response scale for both the student and teacher questionnaires was altered from that used in the Iowa study

("not true," "somewhat true," or "very true") to a five point response choice of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree."

Finally, the follow-up sample size for the present study remained at the original 60 ABE students contacted for the focused interview. The follow-up was conducted by telephone with a replication of Beder and Valentine's follow-up interview form. The follow-up was conducted after three months had elapsed.

Another component of this research was classroom observations. These observations were intended to clarify what actually happened in the classrooms. They were used as a form of triangulation with the student and teacher information. Triangulation is an important concept in research structure. It consists of collecting basically the same data with several different methods. Whether used in quantitative or qualitative data collection, triangulation allows for a greater degree of confidence in the research findings.

Focused Interview

Data collection was in the form of a focused interview where the interviewer read all the questions to the interviewee and recorded the responses. The interview consisted of both open ended questions and closed questions with a series of answer choices ranging between the extremes of strongly agree-strongly disagree. During the interview, the respondents were able to follow a printed form which contained the answer choices (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) available to them for the closed-ended questions. The interviewer pointed to the answer choices at the beginning of the interview and at various intervals throughout the interview.

The ABE students were surveyed within two weeks of entrance into the ABE program. Interviews lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. The interview

format consisted of three sections; *General Questions* (five open-ended questions about how the participant discovered the class, when he/she enrolled, why he/she enrolled at that time, and any problems pertaining to regular attendance), *Specific Questions* (62 statements related to the respondent's lifestyle and reasons for attending the ABE class to which the respondents replied with one of the five pre-established answer choices from strongly agree to strongly disagree), and *Background Information* (specific demographics about the participant and included 19 questions about gender, age, ethnicity, residence, children, marital status, occupation, income, perceived physical health, and public assistance).

Follow-Up

The 60 ABE students surveyed were contacted for a follow-up telephone survey during the last week of January, 1991. Thirty-five of the original 60 were contacted by telephone. The other 25 either had a disconnected number, could not be contacted after repeated tries, or had changed their residence. The respondents were reminded of the original survey and asked for their consent to answer a few questions on the follow-up. None refused to participate in the follow-up.

The follow-up was much shorter than the earlier survey, containing only six questions. The questions included the participants' attitudes about the ABE class, their major goal for attending, whether they were still attending, and if their lives had changed because of the classes. The questions were both open- and closed-ended with specified answer choices. Respondents were always asked for clarification on the open-ended questions in order to avoid researcher assumptions (Weller & Romney, 1988). This was a telephone survey where the

answer choices could not be visualized by the respondents, so the answer choices were more limited for ease in remembering and replying. The answer choices were "very satisfied," "somewhat satisfied," and "not satisfied" and were repeated after every two questions.

Teacher Questionnaire

In addition to the ABE student surveys, 30 ABE teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire concerned with what they perceived as ABE students' needs. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers either by mail or in person while visiting the sites for participant interviews in October and November of 1990. Of the 30 questionnaires distributed, 28 were completed and returned. The questionnaires were piloted with a group of 10 ABE teachers to check for clarity of content, ambiguities, possible problems, and necessary revisions (Borg & Gall, 1989).

The teachers' questionnaire consisted of two parts; *Class Information* (five questions concerning the type and scheduling of class, number of learners, and instructional methods) and *ABE Students* (the same 62 statements related to the respondent's lifestyle and reasons for attending the ABE class to which the respondents replied with one of the five pre-established answer choices from strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Classroom Observations

A final component of the data collection was the ABE classroom observations. These observations were conducted by the researcher and generally lasted 30 to 60 minutes. The classroom setting was studied in order to ascertain whether those identified student needs were actually being addressed.

Observations also included a review of the curriculum materials, lesson plans, and other materials utilized in the classroom.

The observer was looking at the relationship between the teacher and the ABE students as pertaining to the ABE students' needs being met. A continuous recording format was used to record observational data. A chronological narrative detailing everything that happened was recorded at the time of the observation. This was analyzed by classifying the observed behaviors into a system developed by the researcher of this study.

Data Analysis

The combination of the teacher questionnaire, student surveys, and observations created a research design both qualitative and quantitative in nature. The two student surveys included sections where the participants had the opportunity to talk about their feelings, perceptions, and opinions. Analysis included grouping the responses and statements into categories. Qualitative responses were tabulated by counting the number of respondents who included a specific item. These items were then listed in order of frequency mentioned.

Descriptive statistics (frequencies and means) were computed for all variables. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS) was used for data analysis. Frequencies were computed for the questionnaires returned by the ABE teachers. These results were compared to those of the students to ascertain all similarities and differences in their perceived needs. Independent t-tests were used to test for differences between the means of the teacher responses and student responses.

FINDINGS

Sociodemographic Characteristics

The sample ABE population was predominantly White, native U.S. females. Although the sample ages ranged from 15 years to 51 years, one-third of the participants were younger than 20 years of age with a mean age of 26.9. The mean last grade attended for the sample was 8.6. A high percentage (68.3%, n=41) of the sample indicated a desire for vocational training although 32 (53.3%) were undecided about the jobs for which they would seek training. One-fifth of the sample left school due to pregnancy or marriage and another fifth left due to problems at school.

Twenty percent of the sample was required to attend ABE classes by their welfare caseworker, probation officer, judge, or other official. However, the majority were voluntary learners. More than one-half of the ABE sample perceived themselves to be unemployed. Self-perceived employment included homemakers, who considered themselves to be employed and, therefore, not looking for work outside the home. Forty percent claimed to have no occupational training and only 15 (25%) had actually received previous vocational or technical schooling.

The mean family income was $12,446 with one-fourth of the respondents stating that their family income was at or below $3,600 and 75% of the sample had a total family income of $30,000 or less. Nearly half of the sample population was receiving some form of public assistance. The great majority of people was married and had at least one child living in the home.

What are the self-perceived needs of ABE students?

To determine the self-perceived needs of the students, the 62-item "specific questions" section of the ABE student survey was analyzed using the SAS program. The reliability coefficients of each category were established with the following alphas: (1) Self Improvement, .87; (2) Family Responsibilities, .74; (3) Diversion, .74; (4) Literacy Development, .83; (5) Community/Church Involvement, .79; (6) Job Advancement, .67; (7) Launching, .45; (8) Economic Need, .61; (9) Educational Advancement, .61; and (10) Urging of Others, .59. In order to obtain variable means, the survey answer choices were given numeric values as follows: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Undecided, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly Disagree.

Summary of the Students' Self-perceived Needs

Of the 10 categories used to group the individual items, two scale means are lower than the others. ABE students perceive self improvement and educational advancement as their reasons for attending ABE classes. The group means and frequencies of respondent agreement are indicated in Table 1.

The three areas which have the least effect upon ABE students are urging of others (3.7), diversion (3.3), and launching (3.2). Other people have had very little effect upon the decisions ABE students make regarding entrance and attendance in ABE classes. Life events, such as childbirth and marriage, had little impact. Use of free time and leisure activities were not identified as important needs. Economic needs (2.9) were not considered as strong needs by the respondents, although the items related to earning more money and job training

were given strong agreement means. This indicates that these two items are self-perceived needs for ABE students.

Table 1
Group Means and Respondent Agreement for the Ten Categories

Category	Group mean	Percent of respondents agreeing with each category	Number of respondents agreeing with each category
Self Improvement	1.9	52.7	31
Educational Advancement	2.0	48.2	29
Community/Church Involv.	2.3	42.5	25
Literacy Development	2.4	39.5	23
Job Advancement	2.5	36.7	22
Family Responsibilities	2.6	35.0	21
Economic Need	2.9	28.4	17
Launching	3.2	20.4	12
Diversion	3.3	19.0	11
Urging of Others	3.7	12.0	7

Among the remaining categories, the items which indicated the strongest agreement by the respondents related to individual activities or self-improvement traits. These traits, although coming from the different categories, all share one characteristic -- the internalization of knowledge. The fact that ABE students were not that concerned with community or church involvement but did want to read the Bible or become more informed voters is similar to the fact that they want to stop others from taking advantage of them. All of these activities necessitate internalizing new knowledge.

What do ABE teachers perceive to be the students' needs?

Thirty ABE teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire adapted from that used by the ABE students in the focused interview. Of the 30 teachers contacted, 28 returned completed questionnaires. The teachers' questionnaire began with a section of questions on the type of class, instructional methods, and average number of learners. Only seven of the 28 teachers responded that they worked with drop-in students, whereas 75% of the teachers responded that they taught a fixed schedule class. Most of the classes were offered once or twice a week in the evenings. Very few classes were offered during the daytime.

To describe their type of instruction, the teachers were asked to respond with percentages of time spent in group instruction and in individualized instruction (see Figure 1). Individualized instruction was reported by 67.9% (n=19) as the method used for more than half of the class time; 82.1% (n=23) reported that 50% or less of instructional time was spent in group instruction.

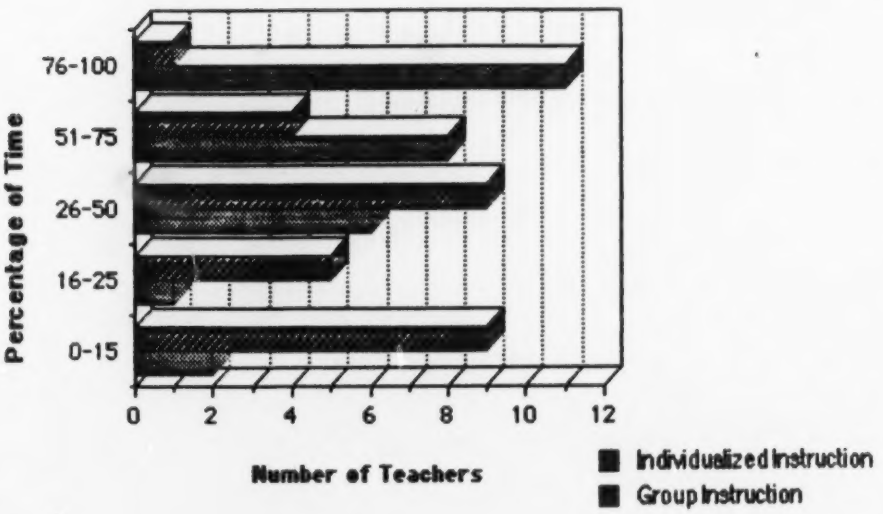

Figure 1. Percentage of ABE class time teachers spent in individualized and group instruction.

The teachers were also asked if they spent any class time in other activities and, if so, what type of activities. Eighteen of the teachers (64%) did not include any other activities in their class schedules. The remaining 10 teachers responded that they used a portion of the class time in other than group or individualized instruction -- a break , counseling, sharing information about self and family, working on computers, reading silently, or practicing test-taking skills.

The reported number of learners usually present in classes is shown in Figure 2.

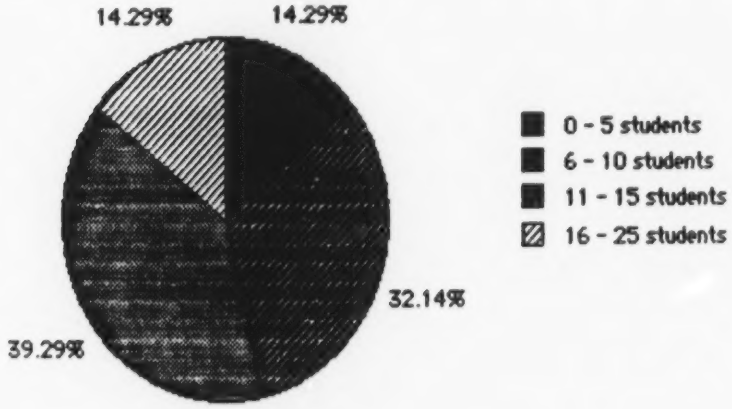

Figure 2. Class size of the ABE programs in the study.

The majority of classes appear to be in the range of 6-15 students. Four teachers responded that they worked with five adult learners and another four worked with groups greater than 15. Nine teachers taught groups of 6-10 students while 11 teachers taught classes of 11-15 students.

The teachers' questionnaire contained 62 statements with one of five answer choices. The teachers had the same answer choices - Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. The teachers were asked to respond to each statement as they thought it applied to the ABE students.

The ABE teachers identified their students as needing more self confidence and wanting more intelligence and independence. Teachers agreed that their students want to learn new things and feel that students need more control over their lives. Less importance was placed on the statement dealing with students

wanting to help other people. The least agreement was found with the statement that the students need to make better use of their free time. The teachers deviate from students helping other people or using their free time better when the students' families are involved.

Summary of the Teacher-perceived Student Needs

The teacher-perceived needs for their ABE students can be prioritized as follows:

Literacy Development	1.7
Self Improvement	2.0
Job Advancement	2.0
Educational Advancement	2.1
Family Responsibilities	2.1
Economic Need	2.2
Launching	2.6
Community/Church Involvement	2.9
Urging of Others	3.0
Diversion	3.8

The teachers identified the most important need as literacy development. The basic academic skills of reading, writing, and communication are their perceived student goals. Self improvement and job advancement follow, being only three-tenths of a point different.

Educational advancement and family responsibilities were perceived as needs that should be considered once the basics have been met. Again, the logic of this reasoning can be seen. Once the literacy basics are in place, the student is ready to advance to the next step - educational advancement. Family responsibilities will be attained once the person has a better job and a stronger sense of self.

Involvement with other people and use of leisure time were not seen as important student needs. Community/church involvement (2.9) was not identified

as an issue for the students. The teachers did not feel their students needed to increase their participation in religious or civic activities. Surprisingly, neither did they list reading the Bible or learning to vote more effectively as student needs.

When asked to respond to the effect of other people on the ABE students, the teachers agreed that co-workers have some effect but that family and friends have almost no effect. The teachers felt that adults may enter ABE classes because of encouragement of others at work but that encouragement from relatives or friends will not bring adults to the ABE classes.

Entering ABE classes because of boredom, to meet people, or to try new experiences was not something the teachers identify as motivators for their students. The highest scale mean (3.8) was given to this category suggesting that the teachers, as a group, disagreed that diversion is a need of their students. Instead, student needs cover the more basic rudiments of literacy, self confidence, and job improvement. Recreational learning or leisure activities were not considered student needs.

How do the student-perceived needs and the teacher-perceived needs compare?

Now that the student perceptions and teacher perceptions have been studied separately, it is interesting to look at the 10 group means in a comparison table (Table 2). By looking at the means of both groups across the 10 categories, one can see similarities and differences. There are obvious differences in what the two groups perceive as student needs. The students themselves put self improvement and educational advancement as most important. The teachers agreed that self improvement is important but placed it second, following literacy

development. The students placed literacy development, with a mean of 2.4 at fourth on a list of 10. The students credited educational advancement as more important than the basics of reading and writing. They were looking at the factors of accomplishment and self-improvement. The accomplishment of successfully finishing their schooling is more important to them than moving up a grade level in essay writing.

Table 2
A Comparison of the Ten Categories of Student Needs as Perceived by Students and Teachers

Category	Students (n=60)	Teachers (n=28)
Self Improvement	1.9	2.0
Educational Advancement	2.0	2.1
Community and Church Involvement	2.4	2.9
Literacy Development	2.4	1.7
Job Advancement	2.5	2.0
Family Responsibilities	2.6	2.1
Economic Need	2.9	2.2
Launching	3.2	2.6
Diversion	3.3	3.8
Urging of Others	3.7	3.0

The teachers felt that community and church involvement (2.9) was not an important need for their students. The students disagreed by placing the civic and religious category third with a group mean of 2.4. Concepts of voting, understanding of governmental affairs, and church involvement were seen as important by the students and placed at the lower third of the list (2.9) by the teachers. Looking at the individual items in this category, the students identified the individual activities more important than the group involvement. They want to be able to improve their Bible reading, become better voters, and understand the governmental system. The teachers rated the variables involved in this category and agreed slightly that their students needed to become better shoppers while the students did not identify improving their shopping skills as a need.

While both teachers and students agreed that the students enter ABE programming on their own, the teachers added that the students are influenced by their co-workers. The students disagreed, showing by their responses that they were not influenced by family, friends, or co-workers. Both teachers and students agreed that adult learners do not enter ABE programs because they want to meet new people nor due to boredom. The adult learners enroll in adult educational programs because they have definite needs and educational goals.

A series of independent t-tests was used to determine how the student-perceived needs compared with the teacher-perceived student needs. The alpha level was pre-established at .05. Using the SAS computer program, the 10 categories were compared to determine if there were statistically different means between the teacher categories and the student categories. Of the 10 categories, three showed no significant difference. Self improvement, family responsibilities, and educational advancement resulted in $p = .305$, $p = .859$, and $p = .593$, indicating

no significant difference between the teacher means and the student means in each of these categories. The remaining seven categories, illustrated in Tables 3 - 9, showed significant differences between the means in each case.

Table 3
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Diversion Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	3.33	.819	.105	-2.86	64.9	.01
Teacher	28	3.83	.655	.123			

Table 4
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Literacy Development Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	2.44	.781	.100	2.73	70.4	.01
Teacher	28	1.67	.569	.107			

Table 5
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Community/Church Involvement Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	2.37	.668	.086	-2.75	82.1	.01
Teacher	28	2.88	.384	.072			

Table 6
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Job Advancement Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	2.51	.786	.101	3.50	78.0	.01
Teacher	28	2.03	.498	.094			

Table 7
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Launching Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	3.24	.632	.081	4.97	67.9	.01
Teacher	28	2.63	.480	.090			

Table 8
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Economic Need Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob > t
Student	60	2.90	.691	.089	4.60	70.9	.01
Teacher	28	2.23	.499	.094			

Table 9
A Comparison of Student and Teacher Group Means for the Urging of Others Category

Group	No	Mean	Std Dev	Std Err	t	Df	Prob>t
Student	60	3.73	.609	.078	9.87	64.4	.01
Teacher	28	2.98	.491	.092			

The greatest difference is seen in the need categories labeled literacy development and urging of others. The teachers recognized literacy development as a more urgent need for their students and believed that other people have more influence over the students' decisions. Economic need and launching were both considered by the teachers to have more impact upon their students. The students distinguished less need for diversionary education and more civic and religious activity. While both the teachers and students agreed that job advancement is a need, the teachers accepted it as more important than did the students.

Summary of the Differences Between Student-perceived and Teacher-perceived Student Needs

There are definite differences between the student-perceived and teacher-perceived ABE student needs. The teachers perceived literacy development, self improvement, and job advancement as the primary needs of their ABE students. The students perceived self improvement and educational advancement (successfully completing their interrupted schooling) as their primary learning needs. It appears that the difference between their need perceptions have to do

with immediate versus long-range effects. The teachers cited as important student needs those which show immediate results. Literacy development gives an adult learner the basic skills to read and write. Educational advancement teaches the concept of lifelong learning. Both highlighted self improvement as an important need yet the students placed it as the most important need. Teachers did not place importance on civic activities while the students felt the need to be better voters and learn more about the government. How do these differences translate into ABE programming?

Are student-perceived needs incorporated into ABE programming?

The follow-up questionnaire asked the participants to respond with their level of satisfaction in six areas of the ABE programming. The six areas include: books and materials, information taught, the teaching, other students, how they were treated, and location. For each area covered, the students were to respond with either *very satisfied, somewhat satisfied,* or *not satisfied.*

The majority of the students were very satisfied with all areas of the ABE classes except with the "other students." When asked about satisfaction level and the other students in the class, 60% responded that they were only somewhat satisfied. At the same time, "other students" was the only category in which no one responded with the answer choice of not satisfied.

The students were asked their major goal for entering the ABE program. Eighteen responded that their major goal was to receive a GED. Another three wanted a high school diploma and six more wanted "to learn." Eight others answered with job related reasons, self-concept or to be able to join the army.

Twenty two of the 35 responded that they had made a lot of progress toward their goal. Another 11 answered that they had made some progress toward their goal and two people stated that they had only made a little progress. No one chose to respond with "none at all."

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations took place at each of the sites used in the research study. At each site, one classroom – that of the interviewed ABE students -- was visited. The researcher observed the class for a minimum of 30 minutes. The longest session, at a computer-assisted individualized center, lasted two hours. The learning environment, teaching methodology, and instructional techniques varied at all the sites. Methods ranged from traditional large-group classroom instruction to individualized computer-assisted instruction.

Summary of Observed Teacher and Student Classroom Behavior

The ABE students interviewed in this study have identified self improvement and educational advancement as their most important needs. Therefore, during the classroom observations, the researcher looked for indications of these needs being met. At the eight sites, these needs, if addressed, were addressed in different ways.

Self Improvement

In College Station, the teacher acknowledged the students' need for positive self-concept by realizing that the ABE students acknowledge algebra as a sign of learning and deviating from the norm to teach simple algebraic concepts before teaching the simpler mathematical skills. Beyond the math lessons, there was not much evidence of any effort by the instructor to work with the students' self improvement. The atmosphere was very formal with the students sitting in formal

arrangements facing the blackboard where the teacher lectured. There was very little interaction among the students or between the students and the teacher other than the academic question-and-answer sessions.

In three of the smaller centers, the instructors knew each of the students by name and greeted them pleasantly, although that usually was the extent of interaction. The students worked individually and there was no joking or conversing among the students and teachers while the students were working. This allowed for no opportunities for the teachers to boost the students' self improvement. In Navasota, the morning coffee time and friendly conversation did allow some interpersonal communications but, unfortunately, once this conversation ended, so did the informal communications. There was no attempt to motivate or reinforce positive self improvement. This attitude extended to the students who did nothing to reinforce the self-concept of the other students. Those students who made eye contact with the observer or an instructor quickly looked away and stopped talking.

In Conroe, the ABE students shifted between two teachers during the course of the evening, neither of which helped the students to gain a stronger self-image. One of the instructors was an elementary school teacher and this showed in her condescending and patronizing responses to the adult students, treating the adults as if they were children. The other teacher was cold and very distant from her students. She did not make an effort to get to know them or anything about their lives or interests. By their own admission, the teachers teach to the whole group, willing to -- even assuming that they will -- lose any adults who do not understand the lessons.

These five sites represent the majority of the sites visited. Knowing that the ABE students surveyed chose self improvement as their most important need and that the ABE teachers interviewed chose it as one of the top needs, it is surprising that the instructors at these five sites showed little or no concern for their ABE students' self-concept. Three of the five sites had very few students. At the regional staff development workshops, the researcher discovered that all three were in jeopardy of being closed by the funding agency due to diminished student contact hours.

In Hearne, the instruction was done totally by computer-assisted instruction and the staff maintained a positive, supportive learning atmosphere. They did not socialize with the students but always responded with honest respect and the was no evidence of judgement or disrespect. Hearne is considered to be one of the more successful adult learning centers in the Region VI ESC district.

Bryan was another center where students' self-concept was incorporated into the learning environment. The use of first names for both students and staff, the use of smiles and soft, encouraging voices were evident throughout the observation. Unique to the Bryan learning center were the wall displays of motivational posters and student certificates of achievement. Here was seen a strong degree of positive reinforcement. The staff, during the observation, actually corrected two students when they made conditional or hesitant statements. Once a student said, "...if I get my GED..." This caused the staff member to immediately say, "You mean when you get your GED." Another staff member heard a student say "I can't do that." She said, "Oh yes you can. We don't accept can'ts here." Both responses caused the students to smile and resume their work.

The eighth site, Sheperd, was as humanistically operated as that in Bryan. The teacher, a retired school teacher, received her own GED at that same site many years ago. She knew each ABE student and acted as if she truly cared about their lives, congratulating and praising them for work well done. She encouraged and joked in the classroom; throughout the observation, she always had a smile on her face. At this site, the classroom was full and had a good record for student contact hours.

The sites where respect and concern for the student were most evident were also the sites with the greatest success rate for GED tests passed. They were also the sites with some of the highest numbers of contact hours. In contrast, the sites where the students were not encouraged to converse and share with the instructional staff and where there was no positive reinforcement, there was a serious shortage of students and contact hours. The sites where there was a limited respect and relationship between staff and students showed contact hours and number of students passing the GED which fell somewhere between those of the other sites.

Educational Advancement

The student survey and teacher questionnaire results showed that while the students considered educational advancement as an important need, the teachers perceived literacy development to be more important for their ABE students. This dichotomy held true in the observations as well. Educational advancement, according to the students surveyed, means successfully completing an interrupted education and the repeatedly heard "I want to get a GED." The teachers felt that reading, writing, and math competency was the real need.

Ironically, the sites where mutual respect and communication were missing were the very same sites where the teachers focused on literacy skills. In Navasota, the students worked on computers, with no teacher instruction and did not have any teacher guidance as to what to study on the computer other than the teacher identifying what skills were needed for the eventual GED exam. In Madisonville and Centerville, the students were also virtually on their own, without even the opportunity for computer-assisted instruction. In College Station, the students did receive traditional classroom instruction, but the majority of it was in literacy basics. Hearne and Conroe staff, using different teaching techniques, focused on literacy basics. Educational advancement relates to a process whereas literacy development refers to specific skills. In all six sites, the skills were taught or learned but the process was absent.

Only in two of the sites, Bryan and Sheperd, was the process introduced. In these sites, the students learned to be creative, to think, to be problem-solvers. In each site, the observer saw lessons when the students were expected to handle a problem without the teacher stepping in. At both sites, the instructional staff stood back and gave encouragement but no answers. At both sites, other students became involved in the search for a solution, solved the problems and learned a process, while achieving a boost to their self-concepts.

What do students expect to be able to do as a result of participation in the ABE program?

When asked whether they were still attending the ABE classes, the participants were divided almost equally in their responses. Eighteen (51.4%) were still attending class while 17 (48.6%) had stopped attending. Those who

were no longer attending were asked their reasons for dropping out of the programs (see Figure 3). There were five different reasons given by those who are no longer attending the ABE classes.

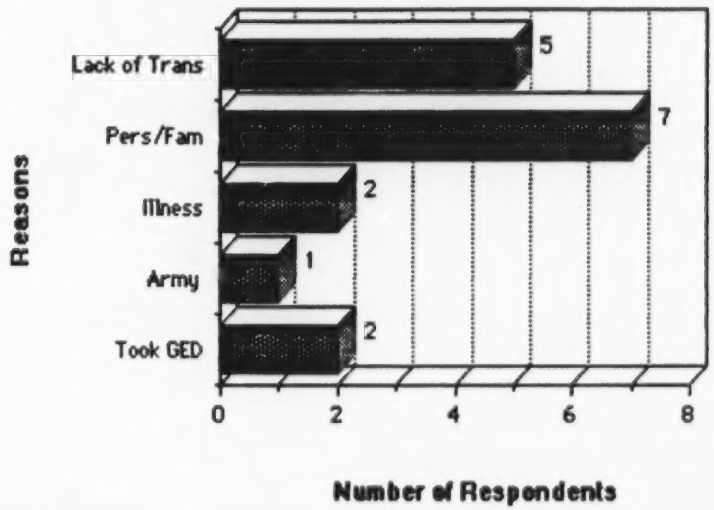

Figure 3. Reasons given by respondents for leaving ABE classes.

The most commonly given reason, personal and family reasons were given by seven (41.1%), followed by transportation, offered by five participants (29.4%.). The other three reasons, illness (11.7%), entrance into the army (5.8%), and taking the GED (11.7%), are very straightforward and easy to understand and were the responses of only a few participants at two, one, and two people, respectively. The group of reasons labeled "personal/family" included each respondent's interpretation of what that wording meant to him or her. Several cited child care and homemaking chores. One was going through a divorce, another was getting

married while a third had a baby. Two stated that there was too much to do with the holiday season so close and one simply said, "there's so much to do."

Sixty percent of the ABE students stated that they wanted to get a GED or high school degree as a result of their entrance into adult education. Another 17.1% simply responded with "to learn" as their goal for adult education. This holds true to the needs identified by the students at their enrollment into ABE programs. When asked how much progress they had made toward achieving that goal, 62.9% responded with "a lot of progress."

Does ABE meet the students' needs?

The study participants were asked if their lives had improved in any way because they attended the adult basic education class. Seventy-four percent answered yes. When those 27 people were asked how their lives had improved, their answers grouped in such a way that five categories developed: 1) more knowledge, 2) positive self-concept, 3) helping children with homework, 4) job related, and 5) my goal was achieved.

The most common answer given related to an increase in knowledge. Fifteen (55.5%) of the respondents replied that they had learned more in their ABE classes. The amount of learning they have done differed from "a little, I'm learning more" and "I know a little bit more than I did when I started" to "learning everything, start to finish." Some people were more specific in their replies. They spoke about life management skills, family budgets, paying bills, and reading. One woman said that her English had improved and that she can speak much better. Another answered that he can "understand math and some parts of speech."

Reading was an issue many of the participants mentioned. They were pleased that they had improved in their reading. Several said that they now read with their children. Many said that they are reading more than they had. All the respondents mentioned that learning is a new experience for them and that they are learning new things. As one participant said, "(the class) helped me figure out problems and use words I never used before."

One-fourth of the respondents said that their lives improved because they have more self confidence or feel better about themselves. The level of their answers ranged from one who, in answer to the inquiry of how much their life had improved, replied "just a bit" to another who replied "a lot of areas." Some simply said that they have more self-confidence while others said that they feel better about themselves. One added, "I can talk to people about my reading more than I could before."

Self-dependence was another answer that showed the improvement in self-worth and self-esteem. "I learned to depend on myself" was how one person put it. The survey participants showed a new level of self-respect. They stated that they were more content, pleased with themselves and their achievements. As one stated, "I now know I'm not a complete idiot."

Helping their children with homework was given by two of the respondents as an improvement in their lives. One spoke of volunteering she now was doing in her children's elementary school. She enjoys learning more about how the school operates, has begun to feel more comfortable around the school personnel and explained that she could now talk with the children's classroom teachers more freely about problems and concerns. Her children are always telling her how proud they are that she "works" at their school.

Two of those contacted responded that their lives have improved in the area of employment. Each explained that the adult education classes taught them information they could relate to their work. One admitted that she now understands her work better and that makes her employment more enjoyable, more comfortable, and more secure. The other woman stated that, with the skills she learned in the ABE class, she was able to go out and get a job. She plans to continue her education until she receives her GED.

Finally, the adult learners were asked if their needs were met by the ABE classes. The majority of those queried answered either that their needs were met or partially met by the ABE classes. Only 11.4% answered that their needs were not met. Of those, half added that their needs have not yet been met since they have not completed their education. Even the people who answered that their needs were somewhat met by the ABE classes felt that they were not completely met since they had not yet completed their GED. One stated "I still need to improve with math and reading." Another added that "once I graduate and put my GED to use, I'll really meet my needs."

The vast majority (71.4%) of those asked responded that their needs were met by the ABE classes. Their responses fit the pattern already established by their earlier responses to the questions about their needs and major goal. Slightly more than one half stated that their life had been improved in the area of knowledge attained. Another 25% replied that they had an improved self image.

Summary of the Findings

Two self-perceived ABE student needs were very evident in the findings of this research. Those needs, educational advancement and self improvement, surfaced after the student survey, the student follow up and during the observation period. During the follow-up survey, a majority of the ABE students stated that their needs had been met. However, the ABE teachers, although listing student self image as a need, responded with literacy needs rather than educational advancement. The findings show that this difference of need ranking made no difference in the goal setting and goal attainment of the ABE students.

Conclusions

1. ABE students enter ABE programs for individual reasons and are not a homogeneous population.

The findings of this research show that ABE students agreed more strongly with some of the 10 categories and less with others. Even more interesting to note, however, is that some of the students agreed that each of the listed categories was a reason for entering ABE programming. This tells us that all 10 categories must be considered as viable reasons by at least some of the entering students. If the premise that all ABE students are individuals and must be treated as such is accepted, then how can ABE programming address or recruit for only those which are identified by a majority of students? While it can be acknowledged that the 10 categories can be ranked by number of students who agreed with each, none of the categories can be ignored since at least some students chose each category. All reasons given by adults for entering ABE classes need to be addressed and considered as important for those individuals.

2. ABE students identify self-improvement as their reason for entering ABE programs.

Their desire for self improvement is the students' primary need. This includes self-respect, self-concept, and a more positive self-image. The students feel a need for self-reliance and independence, and want to be self-determining. Learning for the sake of learning also falls in this category. With very little encouragement, these students could become lifelong learners. But that encouragement must be a part of the ABE programming; and it must be positive and honest.

3. ABE students want to complete their education.

They believe that they are failures since they did not complete their schooling when younger. They see ABE programming as a way to rectify that error. Many of them left their education due to early pregnancy, marriage, or personal problems. "I was too young" and "I was foolish" were common remarks heard during the interviewing. Once they obtain their GED, the students see a future ahead of them. College, vocational or technical training, or better employment opportunities are all seen as possibilities available only by completing their education.

4. Adults enter ABE programs for their own needs and intrinsic motives rather than for monetary or leisure time reasons.

The students chose to learn more about their government and to become more informed voters. They stated that they wanted to obtain promotions and better career positions. They want to be able to read and write better since that is what is needed to advance their primary goals. Their sense of family responsibilities was evident in the statements they made such as "I want to be able

to read to my children" or "I want to set an example for my children." These needs can be traced back to a desire for self-improvement and the concept of lifelong learning. The ABE students in this sample are thinking about long range goals and lifelong patterns.

5. Adult learners indicate a need for learning, but teachers indicate the need for schooling.

The greatest difference between student and teacher views is that of educational needs. The teachers stated that the students need to learn the basics of reading, writing, and mathematics. Perhaps the teachers believe they are being more pragmatic in thinking of marketable skills. The students, however, are looking at substantial, permanent changes in their lives. They see a successful educational experience as the start of a better life, not just an avenue to a better job.

The teachers point out that the students themselves enter adult basic education to "get a GED." They use this as proof that they are correct in their assessment of student needs being literacy skills. However, the students see "getting a GED" as the successful completion of an education prematurely halted in earlier years. To the students, "getting a GED" is as much a symbol as an actual certificate. To them, "getting a GED" is another way of saying "to complete my education." To the students, the GED is an accomplishment; to the teachers it is an achievement.

6. ABE teachers fail to see their students holistically, seeing a set of skill deficiencies and not individuals with specific needs.

A difference in these groupings involves the need category of community/church involvement. The students placed this category third out of the

10 while the teachers placed it eighth. The students want to be more aware of governmental procedures, they want to be more informed voters, and they want to be able to read and understand the Bible. The teachers, however, do not see these as important student needs. Teachers do not see a need for the students to become more politically aware or even to encourage the students to be more active participants in their community affairs. They do not acknowledge that religion and the church could be a part of the undereducated adult world just as they are a part of any other segment of society.

7. The ABE classrooms were teacher-directed, addressed the short-term student need of literacy basic skills, and allowed for limited student input or interaction.

The classroom observations support the conclusions cited above and substantiate the findings of the teacher questionnaires. Curriculum materials taught and lessons presented at the sites were related to literacy development. Nothing was seen that suggested a curriculum focused on lifelong learning or life skills. Books, workbooks, and computer-assisted programs were also directed toward the information needed to eventually pass the GED battery. A majority replied that they spend less than 50% of their time in group instruction and 19 (67.9%) teachers responded that they spend more than half of their instructional time in individualized instruction yet this method of instruction was not supported by the observations. During the observation periods, very little individualized instruction was available to the students. The exceptions were the sites where only computer-assisted instruction was available and the sites where the students were expected to work alone. However, the effectiveness of the isolation of the learning methods used here must be questioned. Often, there was little interaction between the students and the staff and virtually no interaction among the students. This

lack of interaction belies the teachers ranking self improvement so high on the student need list.

None of the lessons presented during the observation periods dealt with civics, community affairs, or citizenship. Yet these are needs identified by the students as important. But the teachers did not rank them as important; therefore, they were not incorporated into the lessons. Since these are not stressed on the GED exam, the instructional staff do not have to incorporate them into the curriculum.

There is a discrepancy between what the ABE students see as their needs and what the ABE teachers see as their students' needs. More seriously, even some of the needs identified by the teachers are not being seen in the classroom. The teachers observed in this research study did not incorporate the student-perceived needs of civics, real life skills, or lifelong learning habits in their lesson plans. Often the attitude on the part of the instructors toward their adult students ranged from ignoring their needs to patronizing condescension. Only the instructional staff in three sites were observed displaying honest respect for their students as adults. In one site, the instructor was too formal to be warm and positive and the instructor in another only spent a few minutes with the students before she turned to recordkeeping matters.

It is clear that if Adult Basic Education programming is to be more successful in recruiting and retaining students, it must be built around the self-perceived needs of the students themselves. Once the students are allowed to have ownership of the program, they will be more apt to remain until they have successfully accomplished their goals.

Implications of Findings for Practice

The strength of a research study should be seen in its possible applications for practitioners. Two major differences between student perceptions and teacher perceptions developed during the research. One addresses the issue of lifelong learning versus learning skills. The second addresses the even more important concept of self-esteem and self improvement.

The ABE students in this study indicated that they enter ABE programming because they want to complete their interrupted education. Reading, writing, and math skills are seen as means toward that end by the students. They are not seen as the end itself. Yet the teachers are teaching what they think their students should learn. In the sites observed in this study, none of the teachers were seen asking the students what they wanted to learn. The concept of the *classroom facilitator* was not seen in any of the classrooms. None of the curriculum materials were geared toward lifelong or life skills learning. Everything in use was designed to "teach the test" in preparation for taking the GED exam.

Adult Basic Education programmers must begin to consider the self-perceived needs of their students if their programs are to continue to be successful. Recruiting, pre-entrance counseling, retention counseling and assessment, and student evaluations of instruction and programming are areas which can be developed more fully. Instructional staff pre-service, in-service, and on-going training need to be implemented.

Recommendations for Practice

1. The adult basic education teacher should be replaced with the adult basic education facilitator who will "trust students to assume responsibility for their learning" (Elias & Merriam, 1980, p. 125). Rather than instructing, the facilitator

creates a learning environment where teacher and student roles disappear and are replaced with laterally equal roles of team members in that environment.

2. Teacher pre- and in-service must begin to address the needs and learning requirements of adults. Another important concept which should be covered is the difference between teaching the young learner and facilitating for the adult learner.

3. Recruiting needs to be developed into an essential component of program design. The recruiting campaign should be divided into segments targeting specific populations with specific needs, interests, and objectives.

4. Pre-entrance counseling should be implemented as a required part of adult basic education program design. The counseling should be done by trained professionals skilled in interpersonal communications, responsive listening, and assessing techniques.

5. Students should become active partners in the formative program evaluation process by evaluating the program, curricula, instructional methodology, and instructional staff.

6. Adult basic education should be given the status, along with monetary compensation, of an important and honorable profession. Once ABE teaching becomes an appropriately paid, full-time position, teachers can be required to continue their formal education to include degrees or credentials for working with adult learners.

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Research should be conducted to develop an ABE student assessment instrument which will identify and consider the students' self-perceived needs.

This would be most successful if it were incorporated into diagnostic skill assessment.

2. It is recommended that this research be replicated in other areas with other ABE populations and ABE instructional staff. Continued research can determine whether self-perceived student needs are the same or different because of geographical or cultural differences.

3. Another recommendation for further research is to do a similar study with the non-English speaking students in English-as-a-Second-Language classes to study the effect, if any, different home language and home culture have on self-perceived student needs.

4. Research into curriculum development and design is essential if ABE materials are to incorporate these needs and assist the students in achieving their objectives. Student input must be an integral part of the development period in order to insure that the curriculum does address student-perceived needs.

This research has determined that there are specific self-perceived needs identified by ABE students. It has also identified the fact that the students and teachers do not necessarily perceive the same needs as important. More importantly, it has uncovered a lack of mutual respect and communication between the students and instructional staff in ABE programming. More research is needed to continue to pinpoint these differences and find the most appropriate and most effective solutions to these problems.

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